

April 7, 2021

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Jessica Simpson and I am a volunteer with AARP Maine, living in Cape Elizabeth.

On behalf of AARP I am testifying in opposition to LD 1083, LD 557 and LD 253. As a non-partisan membership organization, AARP remains focused on the issues that impact Mainers 50+ and that include voting and the election process.

Older individuals vote in disproportionately high numbers and we are proud that voting by older individuals ranks Maine in the top five nationally, including mid-term elections.

The right to vote is the most basic of all democratic rights, and AARP has long advocated for equal access to this right, including the election process. We support legislation that encourages a high level of participation of voters aged 50 and older. Indeed, part of the reason Maine ranks so well nationally when it comes to voter turnout, is because we've put fewer barriers, not more, between voters and this democratic right.

Requiring photographic ID will potentially disenfranchise voters by placing an undue burden on many who have voted for decades. For example, LD1083 requires, for the first time, a citizen over age 18, who does not have a driver's license, state identification, passport etc. to obtain a picture ID from the Secretary of State's office.

In this pandemic year, through Zoom, I befriended two people; one in her 80's and the other, aged 94, who have been voting since age 21 but do not possess an ID on the existing list of acceptable documents and would need to secure a photo ID from the SOS office. Neither drive, one is legally blind, neither have passports, state identification, and neither have children nearby able to take them to the SOS office. Why would we put another bureaucratic barrier in front of Maine voters like these, further distancing them from the democratic right they've exercised for nearly a century?

Additionally, these bills are silent on photo ID requirements for Maine's absentee voting process. Fairness dictates one set of rules for all voters. We do not want to backslide with a new hurdle of a photo ID card to allow one group to vote but not the other.

Most importantly, we wonder if this is a solution in search of a problem. Voter fraud is virtually nonexistent in our state as is well established in reports by former Secretaries of State Summers and Dunlap representing both political parties.

Please consider all the ramifications of these 3 bills and we urge you to vote "Ought not to pass".

Thank you,

Jessica D Simpson
3 Manter St
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107